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How do dynamic capabilities explain hotel performance?

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores the relationship between three dynamic capabilities and their impact on hotel performance. Specifically, we examine the relationship between human resource management (HRM), quality management (QM) and sustainability. In addition, we analyse how QM and sustainability explain hotel performance measured by occupancy rate, average daily rate (ADR) and revenues per available room (RevPAR). These capabilities can generate income, enabling hotels to adapt as quickly as possible to the changing environment. Findings show a significant relationship between HRM, QM and sustainability. The relationship between QM and hotel performance and between sustainability and hotel performance is fully mediated by the differentiation competitive advantage. Our results represent an advance in hotel theory and management because they integrate HRM, QM and sustainability, and show their ability to be a source of competitive advantage and profitability.

1. Introduction

Until 2020, tourism was the world's third largest export industry after chemicals and fuels, and ahead of automotive products and food. Within the tourism industry, Spain ranked second in the world in 2018 in international tourist arrivals and in international tourism revenues (UNWTO, 2020). However, this strong position of tourism was truncated in 2020 as a result of the global crisis caused by COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry has been devastating, although an improvement in its evolution is expected after the administration of vaccines. In Spain alone, it has led to a drop in activity rates of 67% in accommodation, 74% in air transport, 83% in intermediation and 35% in the restaurant sector (Exceltur, 2020).

Faced with this situation, we need to consider what capabilities hotel companies should develop to recover from the impact of COVID-19 as soon as possible. From 2020, conceptual and descriptive works have been published on the effect of COVID-19 on tourism to determine its consequences in the short and long term (Baum and Hai, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2020). Until now, however, researchers have not proposed specific actions to enable the tourism industry to adapt to this changing environment as soon as possible.

For this reason, this research paper is focused on the strategic management approach because it represents the dynamics of the hotel company's relationship with its environment, and the actions it undertakes to achieve its objectives and improve its performance through the rational use of resources. Some researchers have focused on the balanced scorecard to analyse the link between strategy and performance in the hotel industry (Elbanna et al., 2015; Liang and Hou, 2007). Sainaghi et al. (2019) carried out a literature review on hospitality papers focused on the use of the balanced scorecard, and its relationship with performance, strategy, HRM and corporate social responsibility. Within this strategic management approach, we employ the dynamic capabilities approach, that is, the set of skills a company has at its disposal to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences to cope with rapidly changing environments (Teece et al., 1997).

In this paper, we analyse human resources management (HRM), quality management (QM) and sustainability, and we consider them as dynamic capabilities because they are based on the continuous improvement of the service provided, and they enable hotel companies to integrate, reconfigure and constantly renew their resources and capabilities, as Ali et al. (2020) propound. Accordingly, these capabilities have a significant impact on hotels' organisational routines, enabling them to adapt better and faster to the new demands of the environment. The hotel industry is human capital intensive, so HRM enables businesses to learn and share knowledge to reconfigure the resource base

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that tourists and the destination demand. QM, based on continuous improvement, analyses the need for new resources to improve the provision of the service for tourists, identify their new demands, and reconfigure hotels' core resources and operational processes. Sustainability modifies the hotel resource base (products that respect the environment) and creates new capabilities (environmental and social) to adapt hotels to the current needs of destinations.

As dynamic capabilities, HRM, QM and sustainability are a source of competitive advantage. However, their link with competitive advantage in the hospitality industry has traditionally been analysed separately in the hospitality management literature (Del Río-Rama et al., 2019; Dropulić Ružić, 2015; Garay and Font, 2013). In this paper, we seek to go beyond isolated analyses and to understand how the relationships between these dynamic capabilities can explain competitive advantage and hotel performance.

Therefore, this study addresses the following research objectives. Firstly, to identify the relationships between these dynamic capabilities in order to prioritise efforts. Secondly, to determine whether the relationships between these dynamic capabilities improve hotel performance. Thirdly, to analyse whether these dynamic capabilities are directly or indirectly related through differentiation advantage with hotel performance variables. And fourthly, we use specific and objective variables of hotel performance, such as occupancy rate per room, average daily rate (ADR) and revenues per available room (RevPAR), since these operational variables of hotel performance are appropriate to measure the success of hotels, as they are always known by hotel managers and are related to the number of tourists received and the price they pay. Therefore, these objective variables will play a key role in enabling the hotel industry to recover as soon as possible.

This paper is structured as follows. After this introduction, we carry out a review of the existing literature in the second section in order to propose the hypotheses. The third section explains the method for testing the hypotheses, and the fourth section presents the results. Finally, the fifth section includes the conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Dynamic capabilities approach

One of the main questions in the strategic management theory is to know why some companies are more competitive or profitable than others, and to ascertain which management variables may explain these differences. From the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (Barney, 1991), there are companies in the same industry with different profitability levels due to the specific characteristics and internal factors of each company. The RBV firm emphasises this set of internal resources and the capabilities that allow the company to obtain higher levels of profitability than its rivals. The RBV assumes that resources and capabilities are heterogeneous among companies in the long term and can be a source of competitive advantage. However, the RBV theory is considered static and inadequate to explain competitive advantage in changing environments such as tourism (Priem and Butler, 2001).

Consequently, Teece et al. (1997) propose the concept of dynamic capabilities to overcome this weak point of the RBV theory. Dynamic capabilities are strategic and organisational routines through which firms reach new resource configurations as markets emerge, collide, divide, develop and die (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). A dynamic capability is a stable and learned pattern of collective activity through which the organisation systematically generates and modifies its operational routines to improve its effectiveness (Zollo and Winter, 2002).

Several dynamic capability typologies have been identified. For example, Teece (2007) refers to three generic dynamic capabilities, such as those for identifying threats and opportunities, taking advantage of those opportunities, and reconfiguring and transforming the internal resource base to achieve adaptation to the dynamic and changing environment. Ambrosini and Bowman (2009) and Teece (2014) point out some specific dynamic capabilities such as adaptation, innovation, absorption, and reconfiguration of the organisational structure, examining their role as antecedents or determinants of competitive advantage.

In the hospitality industry, some researchers measure dynamic capabilities from a general approach. For example, Ali et al., (2012, 2020) measure the dynamic capabilities of hotels through integration, reconfiguration and renewal/recreation capabilities. Moreover, Eşitti and Kasap (2020) measure sensing, seizing and transforming hotel capabilities. Furthermore, Nieves et al. (2016) employ sensing, learning, integrating and coordinating capabilities. However, some other researchers consider specific hotel management variables as dynamic capabilities. For example, Anning-Dorson and Nyamekye (2020) consider flexibility and innovation as hotel dynamic capabilities, and Seo et al. (2021) consider the degree of asset-lightness.

Dynamic capabilities are a set of specific and identifiable common processes for the achievement of key success factors of companies in an industry, although each company develops them in a personalised way (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). This suggests that dynamics capabilities in the hotel industry should be the "best practices" commonly implemented by hotels based on their individual resources and capabilities (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Seo et al., 2021). And among these common "best practices", we propose HRM, QM and sustainability.

Based on the characteristics that dynamic capabilities should meet, we consider HRM, QM and sustainability as specific hotel dynamic capabilities because they have been shown to enable hotels to swiftly adapt to their changing environment. HRM provides organisations with operational capabilities to manage crises and interventions to facilitate organisational performance that improve crisis responses (Wang et al., 2009). This fact has been demonstrated after the 2008 financial crisis (Alonso-Almeida and Bremser, 2013) and during and after the lockdowns caused by COVID-19 (Su et al., in press). Regarding QM, some destinations have established new protocols for hotels to prevent the spread of the virus while providing the hospitality service for the few tourists who have been able to stay in them (Prentice et al., 2021). These COVID-19 prevention protocols have been developed in conjunction with traditional hotel service quality processes. With respect to sustainability, the pandemic implies an accelerated rethinking of future tourism business models and that their recovery should be sustainable (UNWTO, 2021). Therefore, it is important that the vision of sustainability is developed in hotel companies in order to adapt them to the new economic, environmental and social demands of the tourist environment.

In addition, dynamic capabilities can be arranged hierarchically. First-order dynamic capabilities enable companies to update their resource bases and fundamental capabilities. Second-order dynamic capabilities are used for the development of first-order dynamic capabilities (Schilke, 2014). Moreover, second-order dynamic capabilities are based on learning-to-learn, codification of experience and the transfer of knowledge within the organisation (Zollo and Winter, 2002). Within this hierarchy of dynamic capabilities, we consider HRM as a second-order dynamic capability. This appraisal is due to the fact that hotel employees' knowledge encourages all the types of dynamic capabilities (Nieves et al., 2016), that employees contribute to the development of dynamic capabilities (Elsharnouby and Elbanna, 2021), and that the management of people who work in a hotel company is the basis of the learning-to-learn or sharing of knowledge. Second-order dynamic capabilities help firms better understand and better perform their first-order dynamic capabilities (Schilke, 2014). For this reason, in the following sections, we justify how HRM helps to develop other dynamic capabilities, such as QM and sustainability, and how the capability of QM allows to develop the capability to be more sustainable.

2.2. HRM as a driver of QM and sustainability in the hotel industry

HRM facilitates the process of implementing QM capability. The

hotel industry is labour intensive, and to enhance its intellectual capital, continuous training stands out among HRM practices. The more that is invested in hotel staff training, the more easily the requirements of quality standards are integrated into daily activity (Naveh and Marcus, 2005) because employees become more familiar with the company's quality policy, its objectives, and its documentation. All of this makes employees more committed to the correct fulfilment of their tasks. In fact, an investment in employee training leads to greater internalisation of quality standards, the prevention of errors in service provision and a faster adaptation to the environment (new sanitary measures, reduced physical contact with guests), which are requirements to generate dynamic capabilities (Cai and Jun, 2018; Tarí et al., 2019).

Training, together with employee motivation, their performance evaluation, establishing a reward system, and generating a feeling of belonging, creates a work environment aimed at the constant improvement of the provision of the guest service (Bakotić and Rogošić, 2017), identifying possible improvements, and monitoring the service provision processes (Dhar, 2015; Tarí et al., 2019). In fact, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) collects indicators on employees such as their satisfaction, motivation, productivity and absenteeism as elements to control and improve the implementation of a quality standard. Furthermore, employee satisfaction and motivation affect tourists' fidelity because satisfied hotel employees tend to deliver high-quality hospitality services (Amin et al., 2017), and satisfied guests will revisit a hotel (Su et al., 2016). Based on the previous arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. HRM has a significant positive influence on QM.

In addition, from the perspective of HRM, hotel managers and employees are key to better understand and accomplish the sustainability capability in a hotel, since this capability can be designed and implemented based on the knowledge of the staff. Therefore, the motivation of hotel employees and their degree of commitment to the hotel company have a significant bearing on their being more receptive to learning and applying sustainability practices within their tasks (Sourvinou and Filimonau, 2018) and ensuring that sustainability meets the requirements to become a dynamic capability.

Sustainability comprises three different aspects (economic, environmental and social) and many studies obtain a significant and positive relationship between HRM and sustainability (Kim and Choi, 2013, -employee's organisational commitment-; Jamil et al., 2015, employee empowerment-; Roxas et al., 2017, -human capital, managers' experience and education, managerial talent-; Sourvinou and Filimonau, 2018, -staff communication, training, reward system-; and Cop et al., 2020 -green training-). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. HRM has a significant positive influence on sustainability.

2.3. QM as a driver of sustainability

Siva et al. (2016) conducted a review of the research in which QM is applied together with sustainability to demonstrate the relationship between both dynamic capabilities. They concluded that the research may be classified into four groups: (I) supporting sustainability through the integration of management systems; (II) quality management as support for the implementation of environmental management systems and for the management of sustainability; (III) supporting integration of sustainability considerations in daily work; and (IV) supporting stakeholder management and customer focus.

However, Abbas (2020) points out that the relationship between these two dynamic capabilities has received little attention from researchers. QM practices can be grouped into two blocks: daily practices and continuous improvement practices (Tarí et al., 2019). The daily practices enable hotels to standardise their routine operations (check-in, check-out, cleaning of rooms), making them more efficient and more automatic. Consequently, this standardisation results in more time and motivation to invest in continuous improvement practices to satisfy different stakeholders (employees, tourists and residents of the destination). These continuous improvement practices can be aimed at the most efficient use of resources (food, beverages, energy, water), the well-being of hotel employees (training, motivation, safety in the workplace) and the greater integration of the hotel company within the tourist destination (heritage conservation, sponsorship of cultural and sports activities). Therefore, QM is a facilitator of sustainability (Abbas, 2020; Shafiq et al., 2017), which enables it to meet the requirements of being a dynamic capability. In fact, QM and sustainability improve the capacity of hotels to benefit their stakeholders, and this improvement has a positive effect on hotel performance (Quintana-García et al., 2018). Therefore, based on the previous arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3. QM has a significant positive influence on sustainability.

2.4. QM, differentiation advantage and hotel performance

As a dynamic capability, QM has a positive relationship with performance. QM improves the satisfaction of tourists, employees and society (Cheng et al., 2016; Shafiq et al., 2017; Tarí et al., 2019) and this leads to an improved market share, income and profits of hotel firms (Del Río-Rama et al., 2019).

This direct relationship between QM and hotel performance is possible thanks to the fact that QM is also capable of developing competitive advantage. In fact, it is well known that QM practices reduce errors and times in hotel service provision, increase the efficiency of employees, resources and processes (Tarí et al., 2020), and improve the experience of guests. Therefore, QM is a source of differentiation advantage because guests can perceive greater added value due to their higher perceived quality (Tarí et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4. QM has a significant positive influence on hotel performance and this influence is mediated by differentiation competitive advantage.

2.5. Sustainability, differentiation advantage and hotel performance

Sustainability as a dynamic capability has a positive impact on performance, as can be justified from stakeholders theory (Freeman, 1984), social impact theory (Lee and Park, 2009), slack resources theory (Waddock and Graves, 1997), and synergy theory (Singal, 2014). Regarding the analysis of this relationship in the hotel industry, most of the studies focus on environmental sustainability and show a positive relationship (García-Rodríguez and Armas-Cruz, 2007; Ghaderi et al., 2019; Inoue and Lee, 2011; Kang et al., 2010; Garay and Font, 2013; Segarra-Oña et al., 2012; Theodoulidis et al., 2017).

In addition, there is literature that establishes that sustainability can be a source of competitive advantage as a result of providing a higher quality of service, offering new experiences to hotel guests, creating a reputed image of the hotel and improving the confidence of tourists (González-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Nimri et al., 2020; Singjai et al., 2018). Considering these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5. Sustainability has a significant positive influence on hotel performance and this influence is mediated by differentiation competitive advantage.

3. Method

3.1. Population and sample

The population is formed by all the 3- to 5-star hotels located in Spain in 2018. We used the Alimarket (2018) database only to obtain the census and contact data of the hotel population, which included 5071 3- to 5-star hotels (2233 are 3-star; 2472 are 4-star; and 366 are 5-star).

To test the hypotheses, a structured questionnaire with closed questions was sent by post to the population in two waves, from October 2018 to February 2019. Finally, 365 hotels answered the questionnaire correctly (response rate 7.2%, sampling error 4.94%).

To check the non-response bias, the sample was divided into three thirds according to the date of receipt of the questionnaire because it was expected that the last hotels to respond would be the most similar to the hotels that never responded (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). Pearson's Chi Square and Student's *t*-tests were applied to compare the responses obtained between the first and last third, and no significant differences were obtained between the two subsamples.

To reduce the possibility of common method variance, the recommendations of Conway and Lance (2010) and Podsakoff et al. (2012) were applied. Firstly, in the questionnaire covering letter, it was indicated that the questions about HRM, QM and sustainability should be answered by those responsible for these functions, while the questions on competitive advantage and performance should be answered by the hotel manager. Secondly, objective performance variables (occupancy, ADR and RevPAR) were included in a questionnaire with other perceptual questions. Thirdly, construct validity evidence is offered (see Table 1). Fourthly, the Harman test found that all the variables analysed are grouped into 21 different factors and the first of them only explained 30% of the total variance.

3.2. Measurements

This study analyses reflective first-order constructs (HRM, QM, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and differentiation advantage) and a composite second-order construct (sustainability). Regarding reflective constructs, their items are caused by these constructs, a high correlation is expected among the items, and eliminating an item would not alter the meaning of the construct. However, sustainability is considered as a composite because it is a construct derived from a theoretical justification; it is expected that there will be a correlation between the three first-order constructs making up a second-order construct, and the first-order constructs will not be replaceable with each other (Hair et al., 2017, 2019). The constructs are described and justified below.

HRM practices come from the AMO model, based on employees' abilities, motivation and opportunities: skill-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing (Beltrán-Martín and Bou-Llusar, 2018). This scale includes nine items which were measured on a seven-point Likert scale based on the studies by Beltrán-Martín and Bou-Llusar (2018), Beltrán-Martín et al. (2017) and Gardner et al. (2011) (Table 1).

QM practices are measured using 12 items based on Bakotić and Rogošić (2017), Lu et al. (2019), Patyal and Koilakuntla (2017), and Zhang et al. (2012) (see Table 1). These practices measure management commitment, planning, customer focus, employee management, process management, information and analysis, and supplier management. We use a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree", 7 = "Strongly agree") (Table 1).

Sustainability is measured as a composite second-order construct consisting of 27 items based on Garay and Font (2013), divided into three reflective first-order constructs: economic (four items), environmental management (12 items) and social practices (11 items). We use a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree", 7 = "Strongly agree") (Table 1).

Differentiation advantage is measured with six items from Beal (2000),

Table 1
Constructs and items in the questionnaire. Assessment of the measurement model.

Constructs / items	Loadings > 0.707	Construct Reliability > 0.7	AVE> 0.5
HRM (Reflective first-order construct)[(a)]	**0.859**	**0.906**	**0.547**
• The degree of completeness of the process of selecting employees to fill a job is: (being 1 = not exhaustive: use of few techniques, 7 = very exhaustive: use of many techniques)	0.713		
• How many hours of training average does each employee receive per year? (being 1 = 0 h, 7 = more than 60 h)	0.677*		
• What is the main purpose of the employee performance evaluation processes? (being 1 = controlling employees; 7 = determining their training needs and contributing to their development)	0.727		
• What percentage of employees is evaluated by performance assessment systems? (being 1 = 10% or less, 4 = 40%, 7 = 70% or more)	0.773		
• Are salary increases, promotion, etc., linked to the evaluation of performance in the employees? (being 1 = not linked, 4 = moderately, 7 = closely linked)	0.710		
• In what percentage is the salary of the employees linked to their individual performance? (being 1 = less than 10%, 2 = 10–20%, 3 = 21–30%, 4 = 31–40%, 5 = 41–50%, 6 = 51–60%, 7 = more than 60%)	0.739		
• How relevant are employee participation processes in your company (for example, quality improvement groups or suggestion systems)? (being 1 = rarely used with less than 10% of employees participating, 7 = heavily used, with more than 70% of employees participating)	0.812		
• To what extent are formal meetings with employees used to communicate the situation of the company (results, strategy, etc.)? (being 1 = rarely used with less than 10% of employees participating, 7 = heavily used, with more than 70% of employees participating)	0.757		
Quality management (Reflective first-order construct)		**0.947**	**0.597**
• The manager is involved in the quality system	0.685*		
• The hotel collects and analyses the current needs of the customers	0.750		
• The hotel identifies new needs and wishes of the customers	0.771		
• The hotel controls the processes of existent works	0.792		
• The hotel continuously changes and improves processes	0.792		
• The employees work as a team to identify problems in their work area	0.777		
• The employees work as a team to create new processes	0.794		
	0.792		

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (*continued*)

Constructs / items	Loadings > 0.707	Construct Reliability > 0.7	AVE> 0.5
• The employees work as a team to create new services			
• The employees receive training on quality	0.820		
• The hotel cooperates with intermediaries to improve the service	0.789		
• The hotel cooperates with providers to improve the service	0.764		
• The hotel controls the fulfilment of objectives and corrects deviations	0.734		
Sustainability (Composite second-order construct)		**0.909**	**0.770**
Economic practices (Reflective first-order construct)	**0.861**	**0.826**	**0.544**
• The economic impact of the business on the destination's development is analysed	0.666*		
• Employees' wages are higher than the average in the industry	0.739		
• Bonuses are offered to employees	0.785		
• There are staff training programmes	0.757		
Environmental practices (Reflective first-order construct)[(b)]	**0.846**	**0.946**	**0.596**
• The hotel's environmental impact is assessed	0.751		
• Actions are implemented to save water and/or energy	0.700*		
• Waste is recycled	0.731		
• Environment-friendly products are used	0.752		
• Environment-friendly suppliers are chosen	0.798		
• Employees are trained in environmental matters	0.839		
• Customers are encouraged to save energy and/or water	0.725		
• Customers are encouraged to consume ecological products	0.741		
• Customers are encouraged to participate in environmental protection initiatives	0.794		
• Customers are encouraged to respect the environment inside the hotel	0.814		
• Customers are encouraged to respect the natural environment surrounding the hotel	0.771		
• Actions are implemented contributing to preserve the environment	0.836		
Social practices (Reflective first-order construct)	**0.924**	**0.929**	**0.543**
• The social impact of the hotel is assessed	0.779		
• There is cooperation with social charity projects	0.740		
• Preservation of the local heritage is promoted	0.793		
• Local community development is promoted	0.805		
• Gender equality is promoted in human resource practices	0.631*		
• Work-family conciliation is facilitated among the staff	0.677*		
• Suppliers are chosen with provable social responsibility	0.739		
• Customers are encouraged to participate in social charity initiatives	0.776		
	0.738		
• Respect for the destination's culture and language is actively promoted			
• The facilities exceed the legal requirements regarding accessibility	0.655*		
• Civic attitude among customers is promoted	0.750		
Differentiation advantage (Reflective first-order construct)		**0.911**	**0.632**
• Creation of a brand image	0.705		
• The service offered is of higher quality than that by competitors	0.816		
• A higher number of complementary services are offered, adding value for the customer	0.837		
• The experience offered is better than that by our competitors	0.841		
• Attempts are made to exceed customers' expectations	0.761		
• Major innovations are introduced in the service	0.802		

(a) One item was removed due to validation problems. The item was "Our employees communicate with employees of other departments to solve problems".

Govindarajan (1988), Lee and Miller (1996), Miller (1988). We use a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree", 7 = "Strongly agree"). (Table 1).

Hotel performance is measured with three self-reported objective variables collected in the questionnaire, taking their average value in 2018: occupancy rate per room, ADR, and RevPAR. These hotel performance variables are operational, and all hotel managers always know and manage them. Moreover, they are ideal for measuring performance in individual or firm-level establishments (Lee et al., 2019). Objective data avoids possible biases (Alonso-Almeida and Bremser, 2013) or conflicts of interest (Sun and Kim, 2013).

Two *control variables* are included to improve the model's explanatory power: the star category (3, 4 or 5); and size (number of rooms). It was expected that hotels of a higher star category and those of a greater size would have more resources to implement HRM, QM, sustainability practices and differentiation strategy. In addition, it is expected that these control variables influence hotel performance variables.

4. Results

Structural equations based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) are applied to test the hypotheses using SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle et al., 2015). As our structural model includes reflective and composite constructs, the validity and reliability evaluation tests of the measurement and structural model indicated by Hair et al. (2019) are followed and they are identical.

Regarding the measurement model, Table 1 shows the items' loadings (individual reliability) of the constructs. These loadings must be higher than 0.707. However, there are some items in Table 1 with loadings lower than 0.707 that have been kept because their loadings are higher than 0.4 and their elimination does not improve the AVE of the construct to which they belong (Hair et al., 2017). Table 1 also shows that construct reliability (all its values are always higher than 0.7) and convergent validity (AVE is always higher than 0.5) are fulfilled.

Table 2 shows that all the constructs meet the discriminant validity requirements when applying the Fornell-Larcker and Heteortrait-Monotrait$_{85}$ (HTMT) criteria. The AMO model used to measure the HRM construct proposed by Gardner et al. (2011) is made up of three human

Table 2
Discriminant validity for perceptual variables.

	Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity				HTMT (95% Confidence interval)		
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
1. Human resources	(0.740)	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Quality management	0.568	(0.772)	–	–	0.609 (0.528;0.679)	–	–
3. Sustainability	0.686	0.662	(0.878)	–	0.776 (0.716;0.826)	0.734 (0.671;0.788)	–
4. Differentiation advantage	0.557	0.557	0.485	(0.795)	0.451 (0.365,0.528)	0.601 (0.489;0.691)	0.534 (0.434;0.623)

Note: To check the Fornell-Larcket discriminant validity, the diagonal values have to be greater than the off-diagonal values. Regarding HTMT, all values are below 0.85.

resource practice categories: skill-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing. However, the HTMT values of these three categories are higher than 0.85 (ranging from 0.89 to 0.92). This fact suggests that there are discriminant validity problems between the three AMO categories. Consequently, we decided to measure HRM practices from the AMO model using only a single aggregate construct, as has been done in other previous studies (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017; Takeuchi et al., 2007). Furthermore, Table 2 shows the confidence intervals calculated from 5000 bootstrap samples, supporting the premise that HTMT values are different from one, corroborating discriminant validity.

Regarding the structural model, Table 3 includes the coefficients of determination (R^2) after bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples and the blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure (Q^2) of each construct. All Q^2 values are higher than 0, so the model offers predictive accuracy in all constructs. There are no collinearity problems because all VIF values in the second order structural model are less than 3. The goodness-of-fit of the saturated models using SRMR is 0.070 for the first order model and 0.066 for the second order model, which are both under 0.08 (Hair et al., 2019). We applied a PLS predict analysis and the results showed that a minority of indicators in the PLS-SEM analysis (only seven of the 32 indicators or 22% of them) yield higher prediction errors compared to the naïve LM benchmark, which indicates a medium predictive power of the structural model (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 4 shows the results of the hypothesis testing. HRM has a significant and positive relationship with QM and sustainability. Therefore, Hypotheses 1 and 2 are fully supported. In addition, Table 4 shows a significant and positive association between QM and sustainability, that is, Hypothesis 3 is also fully supported.

To test the mediating effect of the differentiation advantage in the relationship between QM and hotel performance (Hypothesis 4) and between sustainability and hotel performance (Hypothesis 5), Table 4 includes the direct relationships between all these variables to determine if the mediation exists and whether it is total or partial. Table 4 shows that both QM and sustainability are directly and positively related to the differentiation advantage. This direct relationship also occurs between QM and occupancy rate. However, neither QM nor sustainability have a direct relationship with either ADR or RevPAR. Another direct relationship that needs to be met for mediation effect by differentiation is that there should be a significant direct relationship with the hotel performance variables, which in this case happens with ADR and RevPAR. From these results in direct relationships, it can be concluded that the relationship between QM and ADR and RevPAR is fully mediated by the differentiation advantage, that is, Hypothesis 4 is supported for ADR and RevPAR. However, Hypothesis 4 is not supported for the occupancy rate because its relationship with QM is only direct.

Regarding Hypothesis 5, it is confirmed that the relationship between sustainability and ADR and sustainability and RevPAR is totally mediated by the differentiation, that is, Hypothesis 5 is fully supported. However, this hypothesis is not supported for the occupancy rate.

5. Conclusions

This study examines the relationship between three dynamic capabilities (HRM, QM and sustainability) to determine if they are a source of differentiation advantage and, therefore, boost the income obtained by hotels. The results show that HRM capability is a significant factor in developing two other dynamic capabilities in the hotel industry such as QM and sustainability, since training, motivation, reward system, the feeling of belonging and empowerment are facilitators of QM (Bakotić and Rogošić, 2017; Tarí et al., 2019) and sustainability (Jamil et al., 2015; Roxas et al., 2017; Sourvinou and Filimonau, 2018).

In addition, the capability to develop QM has been shown to be a significant enabler of hotel sustainability, since QM improves the work climate so that hotel employees are predisposed to carry out sustainability actions, standardise processes to prevent errors, save water and energy, and be able to offer differentiated experiences to guests (Abbas, 2020; Shafiq et al., 2017; Siva et al., 2016). Moreover, QM directly improves the occupancy rate. However, the relationship between QM and ADR and RevPAR is fully mediated by the differentiation advantage. This relationship between QM and hotel performance coincides with Del Río-Rama et al. (2019), although in our paper it occurs indirectly through differentiation advantage. Therefore, more explanatory value is added to the relationship between QM and hotel performance in our study.

Regarding the relationship between sustainability and hotel performance, it is observed that there is no significant direct relationship between these variables because their relationship is fully mediated by differentiation advantage for ADR and RevPAR. In addition, a positive relationship exists between sustainability and performance (Ghaderi et al., 2019; Segarra-Oña et al., 2012; Theodoulidis et al., 2017), although this relationship occurs indirectly through differentiation. Again, our study offers more explanatory value to the relationship between sustainability and hotel performance.

Based on these results, we offer evidence that the combination of these three dynamic capabilities improves the guest experience through

Table 3
Structural model assessment.

	HRM	QM	Sustainability	Differentiation advantage	Occupancy rate	ADR	RevPAR
R^2	0.035	0.341	0.585	0.347	0.108	0.028	0.029
Q^2	0.017	0.197	0.437	0.208	0.096	0.011	0.012

Notes:
R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 can be considered substantial, moderate (such as sustainability) and weak (QM, differentiation advantages) (Hair et al., 2017). Acceptable R^2 values are based on the context and in some disciplines an R^2 value as low as 0.10 is considered satisfactory, for example, when predicting stock returns (Raithel et al., 2012) or, as is the case in this research work, since it is predicting the RevPAR which is an objective performance variable.
Q^2 values higher than 0, 0.25 and 0.50 depict small (all constructs except sustainability), medium (sustainability) and large predictive relevance of the PLS-path model.

Table 4
Hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses 1 to 3 (direct effects)	β	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence interval	f^2 (effect size) (1)
H1: HRM→QM	0.547	13.466	0.000	[0.469;0.606]	0.439
H2: HRM→ Sustainability	0.451	10.027	0.000	[0.373;0.521]	0.328
H3: QM→ Sustainability	0.405	7.842	0.000	[0.322;0.492]	0.260
Hypotheses 4 and 5b (indirect effects)					
H4a: QM → Differentiation advantage → Occupancy rate (2)	-0.029	0.980	0.327	[−0.099;0.018]	n.a.
H4b: QM → Differentiation advantage →ADR (2)	0.033	2.143	0.032	[0.011;0.066]	n.a.
H4c: QM → Differentiation advantage → RevPAR (2)	0.034	2.392	0.017	[0.011;0.064]	n.a.
QM→ Differentiation advantage	0.394	5.837	0.000	[0.256;0.500]	0.130
QM→ Occupancy rate	0.211	3.026	0.001	[0.091;0.320]	0.022
QM→ ADR	-0.058	0.601	0.274	[−0.122;0.183]	0.002
QM→ RevPAR	-0.049	0.504	0.325	[−0.116;0.193]	0.001
H5a: Sustainability → Differentiation advantage→ Occupancy rate (2)	-0.015	1.079	0.281	[−0.050;0.009]	n.a.
H5b: Sustainability → Differentiation advantage → ADR (2)	0.017	2.493	0.013	[0.006;0.033]	n.a.
H5c: Sustainability → Differentiation advantage → RevPAR (2)	0.018	2.414	0.016	[0.006;0.035]	n.a.
Sustainability → Differentiation advantage	0.208	3.393	0.000	[0.110;0.309]	0.037
Sustainability → Occupancy rate	-0.070	0.969	0.166	[−0.186;0.049]	0.003
Sustainability → ADR	0.140	1.544	0.061	[−0.079;0.228]	0.011
Sustainability → RevPAR	0.137	1.551	0.061	[−0.073;0.226]	0.010
Differentiation advantage → Occupancy rate	-0.073	1.140	0.127	[−0.182;0.029]	0.004
Differentiation advantage → ADR	0.083	2.716	0.003	[0.042;0.122]	0.005
Differentiation advantage → RevPAR	0.086	2.938	0.002	[0.041;0.124]	0.005
Control variables					
Stars →HRM	0.113	2.137	0.016	[0.025;0.198]	0.012
Stars →QM	0.136	3.068	0.001	[0.065;0.211]	0.026
Stars → Sustainability	-0.033	0.832	0.203	[−0.098;0.032]	0.002
Stars → Differentiation advantage	0.125	2.761	0.003	[0.051;0.200]	0.004
Stars → Occupancy rate	0.043	0.720	0.236	[−0.059;0.141]	0.002
Stars → ADR	0.018	0.132	0.448	[−0.074;0.383]	0.000
Stars → RevPAR	0.029	0.240	0.405	[−0.066;0.340]	0.001
Size →HRM	0.120	2.337	0.010	[0.037;0.205]	0.014
Size →QM	0.005	0.115	0.454	[−0.069;0.078]	0.000
Size → Sustainability	0.064	1.872	0.031	[0.010;0.123]	0.009
Size → Differentiation advantage	-0.039	0.794	0.214	[−0.119;0.043]	0.002
Size → Occupancy rate	0.282	5.995	0.000	[0.203;0.358]	0.080
Size → ADR	-0.059	2.028	0.021	[−0.099; −0.013]	0.003
Size → RevPAR	-0.052	1.331	0.092	[−0.093;0.024]	0.002

Notes:
(1) f^2assesses how the removal of a certain predictor construct affects an endogenous construct's R^2 value. As a rule of thumb, values higher than 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 depict small, medium, and large f^2 effect sizes.
(2) Significance analysis with two-tails Student's t. The rest of the analysis are carried out with one-tail Student's t.

differentiation and generates income in the short or medium term to enable the hotel industry to recover, adapt to its new environment.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Our paper provides the following contributions. Firstly, an effort is made to offer theoretical and empirical evidence regarding the relationship between HRM, QM and sustainability dynamic capabilities, which until now have never been examined together to explain hotel performance. Furthermore, many papers that analyse sustainability focus solely on environmental sustainability. In this paper, sustainability is considered in a broad sense (economic, environmental and social).

Secondly, the relationship between these three capabilities and performance is not easy to measure and, therefore, there are no conclusive results. To advance in this relationship, the differentiation advantage is included as a mediating variable between QM and sustainability capabilities and hotel performance. In fact, we found that differentiation fully mediates these relationships for ADR and RevPAR.

Thirdly, we use objective hotel performance variables that are suitable for measuring the profitability of individual hotel establishments such as occupancy rate, ADR and RevPAR, unlike other research works that use perceptual or corporate profitability variables unknown by hotel managers. Finally, all these relationships have been raised through an adjusted and predictive structural model that establishes their relationship from an academic point of view.

5.2. Managerial implications

Our paper offers several managerial implications. Firstly, the proposed structural model allows hotel managers to identify the order in which they should make their next investments in dynamic capabilities in order to adapt to the post-COVID environment as soon as possible.

Secondly, the results show that HRM capability, that is, staff management, is the first step to run the proposed model and achieve a rapid adaptation to the environment. Next, QM becomes especially important to develop a continuous improvement process creating a climate to develop practices related to sustainability in a holistic way (economic, environmental, and social). If this is achieved, hotels will be able to turn these three dynamic capabilities into a source of differentiation to improve the guest experience and significantly increase their ADR and RevPAR. In fact, QM standardises the training and activities of the employees, and will guide them towards continuous improvement to satisfy the tourist in a sustainable way.

Thirdly, the results show that the star category of the hotel significantly explains HRM, QM, and differentiation advantage. Moreover, hotel size significantly explains HRM and sustainability. This is because the larger and higher-category hotels have resources, capabilities and know-how that enable them to better develop HRM, QM and sustainability. In addition, size is significantly and positively related to occupancy rate, but negatively to ADR.

5.3. Limitations and future studies

Finally, this work is subject to several limitations. It is a cross-sectional study applied to the Spanish hotel industry. In the future, it would be interesting to include more dynamic capabilities, geographical locations, and the balanced scorecard approach to measure tourist performance in order to explore new relationships between them and with competitive advantages and business success. In this way, a holistic model could be built to explain competitiveness and hotel performance.

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